

5.0 On-Going Wildfire Hazard Mitigation

Within the assessment area there are no other known wildfire hazard mitigation plans being developed or implemented. A high risk assessment and mitigation plan for “Communities at Risk” program implemented by the Bureau of Land Management has been completed for the western portion of Bear Lake County. This document constitutes the overall assessment and mitigation plan for Bear Lake County. The Bureau of Land Management will be implementing fuels reduction techniques between St. Charles and Bloomington during the summer of 2004. This effort should also be applied to areas south of St. Charles and Bloomington as several years of drought and no treatment has allowed significant woody debris to accumulate. Sagebrush stands are also becoming very dense and burdensome. Treatment would set back succession and reduce the potential for fire and associated intensity.

6.0 Values At Risk

Within the assessment area numerous wildlife habitats exist. The Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge is a 18,000 acre refuge home to many species of waterfowl and upland game birds. In addition, many small mammals, moose, deer. Reptiles inhabit the area. The area covered by this assessment is home to moose, deer, elk, bobcat, mountain lion and small mammals. Many birds are also found living the various conditions within the assessment area. Moose, Elk, Deer, small mammals and various birds utilize the landscape as cover and forage. The Pruess, Sublette and Boundary Mountain Ranges on the West side of Bear Lake County provide significant winter range for Mule Deer and Rocky Mountain Elk. Streams in the area provide habitat for cold water salmonids including the Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, which is a species of concern to Idaho Fish and Game. Many people visit or make the area their residence because of the abundant wildlife opportunities that are common to the assessment area. Wildlife in the area are cherished for their scenic and sporting values. Significant numbers of birdwatchers and tourists are drawn to the Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge to observe fowl and other wildlife.

Home values in the assessment area are highly variable due to the wide range of uses. Recreational homesites around Bear Lake and Bailey Creek range from \$50,000 to \$900,000 while many of the homes in the communities have a median value of \$65,000. These values only represent the value of the home and immediate property but does not include acreage used for agriculture including implements, storage buildings etc... There are also a number of small cabins and other structures used by early settlers that have historic value but are not usable in their present condition. One home within the assessment area is listed on the National Historic Home Registry and is currently unoccupied. Home construction steadily increased from 1970 until the year 2001 where a

decrease was encountered. Home construction is gaining and concentrated around Bear Lake and Bennington. The majority of new home construction in the county is focused around those regions associated with recreation. The county does not yet require contractors to build using any type of building code.

Within the subdivisions, the structures, primarily houses, range in value from \$90,000 to over \$250,000 while the more isolated parcels and small subdivisions have values that range from \$40,000 to just over \$90,000. Scattered over the assessment area are a number of small cabins or shelters used by early settlers that potentially have historic value, but are not usable in their present condition. Home construction has been steadily increasing to accommodate the summer residents. The normal population for Bear Lake County is around 6411 based on last census.

The surface water present is being used for normal domestic uses as well as for irrigation and generation of power. Montpelier Reservoir is located east of Montpelier and was constructed to supplement irrigation demands during the summer and early fall and at maximum capacity stores 4,050 acre-feet of water. In other areas surface ponds have been constructed to provide late season water for grazing animals. In several drainages weirs have been constructed in addition to the dams to allow for seasonal diversion of water for irrigation in the main valley and for stock water on the upper slopes.

Power lines cross the assessment area in several places providing power to the local citizens, farms, small industrial plants and the storage control structure operated by Pacificorp on the south end of Bear Lake. Electricity is transported by power line supported by metal structures that cross U.S. Highway 36 with wooden poles used supplying power to the smaller outlying areas.

A natural gas pipeline crosses the assessment area in a northwest to southeast line carrying natural gas from Wyoming to other regions of Idaho. The compressor station is located outside Georgetown. Some parts of the county are serviced by natural gas but most locations are dependent upon propane, which is stored in above ground cylinders. These cylinders are serviced by one of a number of propane distributors in the area.

U.S. Highway 89 is considered to be one of the states' scenic byways as is State Highway 36. Highway 89 services travelers passing through while State Highway 36 is used predominantly for transport by tractor trailers. Both thoroughfares offer fantastic views of Bear Lake, Bear River, Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge, irrigated farmlands and historic small towns and buildings. Recreational use is steadily increasing and changing from a summer activity confined to Bear Lake to year round recreation as snowmobiling increases in popularity.

All of the small towns within the assessment area have a well groomed cemetery dating back to early settlement days. These are regularly watered and mowed so should be impacted by wildland fires except for firebrands falling in the area on maintenance buildings and areas of heavy brush adjacent to wooden fence posts.